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A national survey (1961-62) revealed that only one adult out of five participates annually in educative activities; the graduate's negative attitude toward education needs to be replaced by an appreciation for life-long learning. Some weaknesses might be overcome through introduction of adult education programs in universities, as well as off-campus inservice training and degree programs and establishment of community councils for coordinating the various aspects of adult education activities. New fast-reacting systems of leadership training can be developed and the quality of the personnel in the field improved. At present, the efforts of adult education agencies are fragmented and no one seems willing to assume a leadership role. Public agencies of adult education should have a system for continuous and reliable data collection, and broader and more balanced programs. The relationship between non-profit and profit-making organizations needs examination to ensure that public funds are not used in the interest of the few. Relationships among national, state, and local agencies must be examined with a view to curtailing overlapping and duplication and to facilitating coordination, consolidation, and decentralization. (nl)

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CONCERNS ABOUT ADULT EDUCATION*

by
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OFFICE OF EDUCATION
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As suggested by Knowles, "Adult education became publicly defined as a discrete field of social practice with the founding of the American Association for Adult Education on March 26, 1926."[1] Like other youthful movements, it has been plagued with the typical problems of definition, description, professionalization and recognition. Its particular birth date however, has made the early resolution of these problems unusually crucial. Most of the significant issues of our day cry out for the services of what is still a relatively immature and gangling field of adult education.

Before identifying more precisely some of the problems and/or questions that plague adult education today, perhaps we should take a quick glance at what it is and what it is capable of doing.

Many have attempted a global definition of the field of adult education, but few if any have succeeded--particularly if we judge success by degree of acceptance. By examining several definitions, however, some common threads become apparent. These threads are best expressed by the words systematic, purposeful, process, adults (sometimes mature persons), learn, part-time, and voluntarily (at least in the sense that there is no legal compulsion). The words purposeful and systematic are used primarily to separate and exclude that learning which may be regarded as random or somewhat accidental from that which is typified by a planned sequence of experiences leading to some clearly specified end. The latter is referred to then as the process of education.

Perhaps the most troublesome term used in most definitions is the word adult itself. Verner suggests that there are clearly three criteria which may be used. These are age, maturity, and social responsibility.[2] The first (age) generally is ruled out because it is judged unrealistic. Many individuals are justifiably served by adult education who are not legally adults. The second (maturity) is generally judged to be non-operational. To suggest that adult education serves only the mature is to burden administrators with the impossible task of defining and establishing levels of maturity. The final criterion (social responsibility) is that which has enjoyed the most widespread acceptance. Compliance with this criterion leads one to accept as adult any one who has accepted adult-like responsibilities in society.

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[1]Malcolm Knowles, "What Do We Know About the Field of Adult Education," Adult Education, XIV, No. 2., p. 66.

[2]Coolie Verner, "Definitions of Terms." Adult Education; Outlines of an Emerging Field of University Study. ed. Gale Jensen, A.A. Liveright and Wilbur Hallenbeck. (Washington, D.C., Adult Education Association of U.S.A., 1964) p. 28.

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The term learn generally connotes a change in behavior (overt or covert) which is not attributable to either maturation, native response tendencies or temporary states of the organism.

Part-time is used by most definers of the field to reflect the rather secondary role (at least from the standpoint of time and energy available for its fulfillment) adult education plays in the lives of most of its participants. This term also serves quite clearly to distinguish many forms of adult education from its youth education counterparts. The latter usually demands a primary commitment of time and energy by its participants.

Finally, the term voluntary is used to convey a lack of any legal compulsion behind participation in adult education. It is realized, however, that there exists a great range in voluntariness surrounding participants of various agency based programs of adult education.

Still other terms and phrases have been used to describe adult education. Many of these identify subleties missed by the definitions alluded to above. Notable among these descriptions is the statement that adult education tends to be more instrumental and flexible than other forms of education. This notion is generally associated with the voluntary and part-time nature of adult education. It is argued, since adult education is for many a voluntary activity which competes for time with many other adult activities, it must be highly flexible and reflective of adult needs and interests. It is further argued that adults unlike youth are not concerned with preparing themselves for an ill-defined future--they are living that future and finding it plagued with problems for which solutions must be sought through education.

Additionally adult education has been described as extremely diverse and multidimensional. There is no single institution engaged in adult education--rather there are many. Some are exclusively concerned with education such as university extension (general and cooperative), university residential centers, evening colleges, public schools, and junior colleges while others are only partly educational, such as business and industry, labor unions, Armed Forces, religious institutions, penal institutions, and voluntary associations. As a matter of fact, Johnstone found in his National survey of 1961-62 that over half of the education activities in which adults were engaged were sponsored by institutions which were not primarily educational in nature.[3]

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[3]John W. C. Johnstone and Ramon J. Rivera, Volunteers for Learning (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1965), p. 61.

Another dimension of the field is its leadership. Here again we find a range which makes a special case of adult education and generates a special set of problems to be resolved. We have full-time careerists in the field as typified by directors of public school adult education, deans of university extension, training directors in business and industry, etc. In addition there is a large number of practitioners who may be regarded as only part-time, i.e., part-time teachers in the evening program of the public schools and junior colleges, educational officers in the Armed Forces, etc. Finally there is a bulk of volunteer adult educators who perform their tasks with no remuneration, i.e., chairmen of educational committees of voluntary associations, group discussion leaders, teachers of adult Sunday School classes, etc.

Finally, there is the program dimension. A popular classification for this dimension includes the categories of vocational-technical, professional, fundamental or remedial, leisure, and citizenship.

Now that we have explored, however briefly, what adult education is--let us turn to the question: "What are its professionals ideally prepared and willing to do?" In short, the competent adult educator is capable of transforming needs of the adult segment of our society into clearly stated instructional objectives and thence designing and executing a program which stands a more than good chance of success. Of course to do this, he must be perceptive of and well versed in the order and structure of society, determinants of individual and group behavior, theory and practice in program planning and evaluation, administrative theory and practice, adult learning theory and teaching practice. This, to be sure, is to name only a portion of the knowledge he (the professional adult educator) must possess.

Given the above rather optimistic statement of what the professional adult educator is ideally prepared and willing to do, one might reasonably ask, "Why has the field as a whole not been more effective?" Answers to this question may be found by exploring some of the unresolved problems and questions that plague the field.

If what was said earlier defines what the professional adult educator is prepared to do, then the resolution of a reasonably complete list of problems should define the conditions for doing or set the stage for realizing the full potential of the field of adult education.

We turn now to the identification of such problems variously gathered from members of the committee of adult education organizations and members of the Commission of Professors of Adult Education. Some, it will be discovered, are accompanied by recommendations for action while others are left open as food

for thought. In either case, they are presented to the Education Commission of the States with the hope that some may find their way to the Commission's Over-all Program of Concerns.

Public Acceptance

The results of a National survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center in 1961-62 revealed that one adult out of five participates in some form of educative activity during the course of a single year.[4] In this day of rapid techno logical and social change, there may be just cause for concern over this ratio. How long will the four non-participating adults continue in the mainstream of society contributing thereto and profiting personally therefrom? It is inconceivable that these individuals can long withstand the bombardments of our rapidly changing society without the supportive influence of continuing education.

Assuming the desirability of and even necessity for continuous learning on the part of most all United States citizens in the twentieth century, the question becomes--Why do as many as four out of five fail to explicitly engage themselves in learning activity? Not to be forgotten here is the importance of general accessibility and accessibility of those kinds of programs which indeed reflect the needs and problems of the non-participating public. These problem areas, however, will be dealt with later. The focus at this point is on the resistance that comes from some negative orientation on the part of the learner toward continuing education in general.

1. Negative Attitude toward continuing Education--Far too frequently youth that graduate from our secondary schools or institutions of higher learning carry with them a negative attitude toward education--further supported by the degree as a symbol of termination. If a student's bag of cognitive skills and abilities has been filled to overflowing, yet he has developed that orientation which resists further learning, what has he profited?

2. Development of a concept of and Appreciation for Life-Long Learning.--This question, however important, is not an easy one to answer. Research is needed to disclose those kinds of in-school and out-of-school experiences that foster such an appreciation. One might start by identifying groups at various age levels who obviously possess the appreciation and through their self reports identify instances which were critical to the development of such appreciation.

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[4] Ibid., p. 34

In the meantime, if we can assume that the quality of a person's early experience in elementary and secondary schools is an important determinant of his attitude toward continuing education, we might recommend that teachers themselves be conditioned to acquire the concept of educational continuity. Many of the elementary and secondary school teachers with whom I have had contact see their exclusive responsibilities resting within the limits of the grade level and subject matter they teach. They generally do not perceive what they are doing as merely a link in an endless chain of education that ends only with death. In the absence of such a global identity, there exists little, if any, commitment to fostering the notion of continuation among their pupils. As a matter of fact, few teachers of our elementary and secondary schools appear to be aware of the opportunities for continuing education of which their students may subsequently avail themselves--that is, opportunities other than the degree seeking opportunities through our university and college systems.

How can teachers of our elementary and secondary schools be encouraged to develop this awareness of "something beyond"--this commitment to instilling in their students those attitudes and appreciations as well as cognitive skills and abilities requisite to their continuing educational pursuits throughout life? The field is wide open for experimentation here. As a starter, I would suggest that every major college or school of education in each of our states be encouraged to introduce an adult education orientational course which all education majors would be required to complete. The Commission of Professors of Adult Education stands ready to assist such schools in designing these courses.

3. Securing Greater Participation in Adult Education by our Current Adult Public.--Perhaps it is reasonable here to suggest that an adequate understanding of the breadth and depth of adult education on the part of "John Q. Public" together with awareness of specific opportunities for engagement in various program areas would indeed promote greater participation. Because adult education is so diverse, with its content spanning the vastness of adult interests and with its institutional basis numbering many, misunderstanding comes easy. Adults tend to define adult education in a manner consistent with their exposure to it, limited though it may be. Thus, one person may define adult education as synonymous with literacy education offered for adults by the public schools. Still another person may restrict his definition to that which the County Agricultural Agent does, etc.

At least part of the above problem might be solved by encouraging the governmental and educational officials of each sizeable community across the country to establish community adul education councils. The central responsibility of these councils would be to assure that the total and collective adult

education resources of the community were being utilized in the most effective and efficient manner to resolve the breadth of educational problems in that community. At least one representative from each adult education agency in the community would sit on the council to assure that others were constantly kept informed of programming and resource changes being made by his agency. In addition, a core of professional adult educators would be hired to engage in those activities which because of their transcending nature are not properly the function of any one agency . . . i.e., 1) conduct of periodic community surveys, to assure that agencies of adult education continue to reflect needs of the community and individuals therein, 2) establish a counseling and informational center through which individuals could be processed on the way toward selecting that learning activity which most nearly fits their needs, 3) keep the entire community informed of the various adult educational activities in which they may engage themselves, and 4) continuously involve clusters of the community in discussions which would result in their continued identification with adult education and which would be a constant source of new program ideas.

Leadership Development

There are presently only twenty universities in the United States that offer a doctorate in adult education and another 40 that offer the master's degree. Moreover, the sum of doctorates produced by all concerned since the first at Columbia in the 1930's total less than 600.[5] When this information is related to the estimate that there are now in existence more than 100,000 adult education positions that require the competence of a professional, it seems clear that we have not and are not keeping abreast of demand. What is even more disconcerting is that the estimate of 100,000 positions was made prior to the appearance of such program stimulating Federal acts as the Economic Opportunity Act, Secondary and Elementary Education Act, Technical Services Act and the Higher Education Act.

Numbers of professionals available for hire, of course, is not our only concern. We are also concerned with quality. Although progress has been made, we have not and are not attracting the young, highly competent scholars who have time, energy and the adventurous spirit demanded by the youthful movement of adult education. As McNeil relates in his discussion of University Adult Education, "Too often, like moths to a light bulb, inferior

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[5]Cyril O. Houle and John H. Buskey, "The Doctorate in Adult Education, 1935-1965," Adult Education, XVI (Spring, 1966), p.134 and Cyril O. Houle and Ivan M. Lappin, "Doctorates in Adult Education Awarded in 1966," Adult Education, XVII (Spring, 1967), p. 132-133.

people cluster in the ranks of adult education. As a result, traditional faculty members--many of them, it is true, no better than the objects of their contempt--regard those in adult education as inferior members of the University Community."[6]

The problems and/or recommendations that appear to grow out of this back-drop of information are elaborated below.

1. Securing an Adequate Number of Well Trained Professionals. --First off, although we are quite certain of the number of universities and colleges that have graduate programs in adult education we are not at all certain about the number which offer course work but no degree in the area. The first recommendation would therefore be, to encourage the conduct of a national survey to ascertain the exact status of instruction in adult education--be it degree, course offerings and/or non-credit in-service.

Even without knowledge of who does what in terms of leadership development in adult education, it is perhaps reasonable to suggest that each state have at least one graduate program in adult education. Where there is none, influentials should encourage that one be established. Here again, the members of the Commission of Professors of Adult Education stand ready to assist in the development of such programs.

Lest we become fixated on graduate instruction as the only vehicle for leadership development and the master's and doctor's degree as the only--and for that matter the most important--symbol of professional competence, let us hasten to suggest that in-service education for credit or non-credit is also a viable instrument for professional growth. Universities already operating graduate programs or offering courses in adult education should be encouraged to extend their services off-campus for teachers and administrators in-service. Incidentally, an important source of such encouragement would be that of an overload, extra pay policy. Also, it seems reasonable and proper that divisions of adult education where they exist in state departments of education of the respective states be encouraged to exert more positive leadership in organizing and designing the proposed experiences.

We may further ask--is it feasible that some of the leadership roles be fulfilled by those who have not studied beyong the bachelor's degree? No institution in the United States now offers an undergraduate degree in adult education--perhaps they should. Leastwise, it appears that we may have identified an important feasibility study. How employable would a holder of a bachelor's degree in adult education be? What kinds of competence should he possess? Which agencies would employ him? etc. etc.

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[6]Donald R. McNeil, "The University and Adult Education," Adult Education, XIII, No. 2, p. 82.

Along similar lines, the question of experimental off-campus degree programs in adult education may be raised. Of course, experimentation and pilot studies should precede any recommendation for widespread adoption of such a system. Such experimentation would hopefully, answer such questions as:

Are there combinations of format and procedures, (Self-study, correspondence, laboratory, etc.) which are as effective or more effective than the traditional course taking format in bringing about desired changes in the graduate student? Do off-campus, part-time students achieve as well as on-campus, full-time students? etc.

1) Development of New Fast-Reacting Systems of Leadership Training.--The full burden of resolving this question should not rest with those who have responsibility for leadership training. Legislators and professional educators administering federal funds must somehow manage to allow leadership trainers more lead time. Additionally, however, new systems and models which have greater capacities to react quickly must be devised.

2) Increasing Quality of Personnel in the Field.--At least part of the answer to this question rests with a sound recruitment and selection program. More young, highly qualified holders of the bachelor's degree must be encouraged to pursue careers in adult education. *The question, of course,* is how? First off, they must be informed that career patterns in adult education do exist. At least a step in this direction would be to secure necessary money to publish and distribute, widely, a career brochure.

To be effective, however, efforts at career information bombardment must be followed by an objective means of selection. It is at this point that a number of unknowns appear--the most significant of which is criteria for selection. Before we can identify the qualities we must select for--in addition of course, to the traditional qualities of mental ability, etc.--we must be aware of the total package of qualities that make for an effective adult educator. We have many intuitive notions about which qualities are most important, but we need precise task analysis studies to increase our certainty. Once knowledgeable about the total array of qualities, we can sort those for which we can train from those for which we must select.

Program Development

As the burgeoning field of adult education strives toward becoming a potent force for social good, it continues to encounter a number of program development problems or needs. These problem areas or needs are identified and discussed below.

1. Greater Unity and Sense of Direction.--Liveright after exploring the field of adult education in 1965 at the request of the U. S. Office of Education, reported that, "In addition to the unavailability of information, the fact that there are no central policies or guidelines and no provisions for cooperative planning which would provide some sense of direction or cohesion in federal activities in adult and continuing education, became apparent."[7] He found in existence some fifty-five programs in twenty-one different departments and agencies. More unity is needed at the federal level in adult education if the local level is to make the most of existing federal programs.

Apparently such lack of direction is not restricted solely to the Federal Government; it exists also at the operational level in communities, counties, states and regions across the country. Liveright again reports, "In spite of the fragmented nature of adult education today, no agency or institution appears to be assuming leadership in trying to develop a sense of direction in the field or in working toward planning and moving toward a rounded and comprehensive program of continuing education."[8] It would appear that coordination and direction finding councils or committees similar to the community councils explained earlier are also needed at the state and regional level.

2. A Greater Commitment on the Part of Many States to the Concept of Free Public School Adult Education.--Lack of commitment of some states is clearly shown by the absence of professionals on the state department of education staffs concerned with general adult education. Still other states have only recently hired such a person to administer adult basic education funds from the Federal Government. This action, however, is not indicative of state commitment. Quite the contrary, it constitutes a reaction to a Federal commitment--a commitment which incidentally may quickly shift with the political modes of our Executive and Legislative branches of government. If adult education is in the public interest and if it can speak to the needs of our society, then it is indeed worthy of a sizeable and ongoing commitment by each and every state. The value of this commitment is well exemplified by the State of Florida which has been organized at the state and county level to do public school adult education for a number of years. Its support of adult education is secure in that it was made a part of the minimum foundation program. When the opportunity for Federal Adult Basic Education money came along, Florida was ready. In fact, taking advantage of such an opportunity was a matter of simply expanding

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[7]A. A. Liveright, "Some Observations on the Status of Adult Education in the U. S. Today," Adult Education, XVI, No. 4, p. 240.

[8]Ibid., p. 242.

what already existed and will continue to exist with or without aid from the Federal Government.

3. A Continuous and Reliable Data Collection System.--An on-going, systematic procedure for collecting data concerning the scope and nature of activities of the various agencies of adult education is sorely needed. Such data are necessary if effective planning is to take place and if we are ever to be understood by the general public and by those whose support we seek. The multi-institutionality and program diversity which typify adult education makes the job of securing comparable data extremely difficult. The terminology and descriptive units included must be general enough so all can find meaning in them, yet not so general as to be meaningless as indices of nature and scope. About the only current and reliable data about adult education programs, participation and activities has been gathered through the college registrars by the joint AUEC and NUEA Committee on Minimum Data and Definitions.

4. Broader and More Balanced Programs by Public Agencies of Adult Education.--Adult education programming by public agencies whether public schools, junior colleges or universities, has typically been narrow. Education for vocational, occupational and professional competence are still emphasized at the frequent exclusion of such important program areas as education for family and personal responsibility and education for civic and social responsibility. More recently, concern has been expressed about what appears to be an over identification of adult education with fundamental or basic education. The program emphasis changes from agency to agency and from time to time, but they remain restrictive. Few communities exhibit the breadth of adult education programming which would suggest that they are concerned with all the educational needs of all their members.

There are a number of very practical reasons why agencies (alone or collectively) have tended to be somewhat restrictive in their programming. Many of these reasons, however, can ultimately be laid to rest on the doorstep of inadequate financing. Pitchell, for instance, suggests that "the pay-as-you-go philosophy which has prevailed in continuing education for so long, has inevitably led to curriculum emphasis on popular, 'bread-and-butter' courses for clientele who could afford to pay for them."[9]

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[9]Robert J. Pitchell, "A Survey of the Current Situation in Higher Adult Education in the United States: Research, Problems and Issues." (Mimeographed.)

Similarly, Carey in his study of universities and colleges, found that divisions of adult education which were regarded as either break-even or money-making organizations were generally those with limited offerings. In such divisions, little experimentation was apparent and emphasis was placed on credit and vocational course offerings. Finally, divisions which were privileged to make up deficits in their own programs, use surplus as they saw fit, and maintain some "risk" capital were also the more active divisions.[10]

Other factors that appear to be associated with the restrictive program phenomena and which appear to funnel through the finance question include:

1) large portion of part-time employees in the field whose primary interests lie elsewhere, 2) marginal, low priority position of adult education in institutions designed primarily for functions other than adult education, 3) lack of imagination and daring on the part of adult education administration and program planners, 4) limited number of institutional arrangements established especially for adult education, and 5) limited interest and commitment on the part of educators and politicians at the local and state level.

So long as conditions outlined above prevail, adult education will not be able to speak to the problems of present day society with anywhere near the force of which it is potentially capable. This point is clearly made by Pitchell whose comments are paraphrased below.

To the extent that state and Federal governments shift to a policy of adequately providing continuing education programs to alleviate social maladies and to provide educational opportunities to those who cannot afford to pay for them, program will inevitably expand.

To the extent that new groups, such as women, alumni, and labor unions, develop vital interests in lifelong learning and have the resources to pay for them, programs will adjust to accommodate them.

To the extent that community problems multiply at local and state levels, the outreach of adult education agencies will become greater.

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[10]James T. Carey, Forms and Forces in University Adult Education (Brookline, Mass.: CSLEA, 1961).

To the extent that leisure time increases for the average citizen, program emphasis on avocations, arts, and human relations will be essential.

To the extent that we expand into the field of international education, special offerings, similar to the Peace Corps training programs, will have to be designed.

To the extent that skills of businessmen, scientists, and professional persons continue to become obsolescent due to technological advances and an increasingly complex environment, existing programs must be altered and new ones established.[11]

Some adult education agencies are on their way toward developing the program breadth indicated above while others are still struggling with the lack of administrative support, inadequate financial base, etc.

5. Concern Over an Ever Growing Involvement of Profit-Making Organizations.--There can be little doubt that the involvement of profit making organizations in adult education, beyond the manufacture of materials and equipment or in-service training for their own employees, is increasing. Examples of organizations so involved are Xerox, Time, General Electric, I.B.M., Raytheon, R.C.A., C.B.S., Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing, Litton, I.T.T., Lear Siegler and Westinghouse. Pitchell reports that, "The full range of each company's activities has not been compiled (perhaps a study should be designed to do this), but at least one company manufactures equipment and materials, programs instruction, develops curricula, manages educational programs, carries out research, operates a school, and recruits and counsels students."[12]

The issues involved in this trend have been made quite clear in still another statement in Pitchell's report: "It is obviously too early to ask whether the educational establishment (with their limited risk capital and funding arrangements)[13] can survive the competition of corporate grants. But it may not be too early to ask whether public funds should be used to support the educational programs of profit-making enterprises when the same companies control the profitable manufacturing of educational materials and equipment, and are fully financed (including profits) from public sources for "unprofitable" instructional programs. This raises questions not only about the ultimate cost to the taxpayer but also whether an organization whose primary function is to make profits for stockholders, which is responsible only to its stockholders and which controls within that

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[11]Pitchell, p. 16.

[12]Pitchell, p. 32.

[13]Statement with parenthesis is not Pitchell's.

framework the production of educational materials, research, evaluation, instruction, and counseling, is in the best interest of education in this country."[14]

The educational programming competition which has emerged between profit making and non-profit making institutions of our society might encourage both to produce better products, but we must examine the question further before we reach such an easy conclusion. Little systematic data has been compiled concerning the specific extent and nature of the competition--and more importantly the effect it is having on non-profit adult education agencies and the quality of the overall adult education enterprise. One might hypothesize here that the extensiveness of the capital resources of many of the corporate giants entering the educational market place makes it difficult, if not impossible, for non-profit or small entrepreneurial organizations to compete.

6. Relationships Between National, State and Local Agencies. --As federal programs continue to increase so do our concerns with overlapping, duplication, coordination, consolidation and decentralization. Who shall be responsible for labor education programs--the Department of Labor or the Office of Education? Who shall be responsible for an agricultural migratory labor education program--the Office of Education or the Departments of Labor or Agriculture?

Once again, Pitchell has identified the issues involved in a struggle for an effective and efficient relationship between the national, state and local components of the adult education system. They are as follows:

1) Detailed national program planning vs. broad program guidelines.

2) Broad national programs vs. local program needs.

3) General agency grants vs. individual project requests.

4) Fund allocations through state governmental agencies vs. direct grants to operating institutions.

5) Fund allocations through local umbrella organizations vs. direct grants to operating institutions.

6) Program design, fund allocations, and supervision through regional Federal offices vs. direct responsibility from Washington.[15]

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[14]Pitchell, p. 33

[15]Pitchell, p. 6.

Studies are urgently needed to explore the effectiveness of various relationships that have been established and the various instrumentalities that have been developed to implement Federally funded programs of all sorts.

In conclusion, we believe that the above concerns classified under the headings of Public Acceptance, Leadership Development, and Program Development are crucial to the further development of adult education as a constructive force for good in our democratic society. We, therefore, encourage the Executive Committee of the Education Commission of the States to consider them as they formulate their policies and plan their programs of action.

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on Adult Education